

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

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R 102250Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5056

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, CS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT FIGUERES TO MEDIATE ICE LABOR DISPUTE

REF: SAN JOSE 3157

1. PRESIDENT FIGUERES' PRESS OFFICE RELEASE A STATEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 8 REPORTEDLY SAYING THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD AGREED TO PERSONALLY MEDIATE THE LABOR DISPUTE BETWEEN ICE, THE GOVERNMENT ELECTRICITY INSTITUTE, AND THE TWO UNIONS--SITET AND ASDEICE--WHICH ARE DEMANDING REINSTATEMENT OF THE EIGHT DISMISSED ICE EMPLOYEES. FIGUERES' STATEMENT CAME ON THE HEELS OF A MEETING HE HELD WITH UNION LEADERS AND THE MINISTER OF LABOR ON SEPTEMBER 7. THE PRESS RELEASE, WHICH WAS PRINTED TEXTUALLY IN THE SEPTEMBER 9 PRESS, ASKED THAT PAID NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING FROM BOTH SIDES CEASE IN ORDER TO REDUCE MUTUAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE PARTIES. THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS STATEMENT PREDICTED THAT AFTER A TWO WEEKS COLLING-OFF PERIOD BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10, A SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND TO THE ONGOING DISPUTE.

2. SITET HAS REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED THE FIGUERES MEDIATION PROPOSAL--A PROPOSAL THE UNIONS HAVE DESIRED FOR SOME TIME AS A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO A STRIKE WHICH COULD
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PROVE DISASTROUS TO THE UNIONS' FUTURE. ICE HAS NOT

YET ACCEPTED THE MEDIATION PROPOSAL, BUT IS REPORTEDLY MEETING TODAY, SEPTEMBER 10, TO CONSIDER THE MATTER. IN THE MEANTIME, SITET SPOKESMEN HAVE REPORTEDLY THREATENED AN IMMEDIATE STRIKE IF ICE DOES NOT ACCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER. SITET SPOKESMEN ALSO WERE REPORTED TO HAVE AGREED TO STOP THEIR ANTI-ICE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN ONLY IF ICE ALSO AGREES TO CEASE ITS DIRECT AND INDIRECT ATTACKS ON THE UNION. ON SEPTEMBER 7 THE FIRST UNION PICKETS WERE INSTALLED IN FRONT OF THE ICE BUILDING; THESE ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN PLACE THIS WEEK.

3. COMMENT: FIGUERES' AGREEMENT TO MEET WITH UNION LEADERS AND THEN TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE HAS BEEN A MAJOR UNION OBJECTIVE. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT'S APPARENT DECISION TO LET THE CONFRONTATION COOL OFF FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH MEDIATION MAY END UP SERVING TO SAP STILL MORE STRENGTH FROM THE ALREADY ERODED UNION POSITION. IN ANY CASE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ICE, A GOVERNMENT BODY, CAN AVOID SUBMITTING TO PRESIDENT FIGUERES' MEDIATION OFFER. WITH ICE AGREEMENT TO ACCEPT PRESIDENTIAL MEDIATION, THE STAGA WILL BE SET FOR THE POLITICAL SOLUTION SOUGHT BY THE UNIONS.
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